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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 000407

SIPDIS

NSC FOR JFRAZER, JFICKLIN
DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W

E.O. 12598: 02/06/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OPDC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: SPECIAL APPEAL TO PRESIDENT BUSH ON THE
LAGOS MUNITIONS DISASTER

REF: (A) ABUJA 366; (B) LAGOS 266 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER. REASON 1.5.

[11](#). (SBU) On 05 February, Embassy received the following letter of Special Appeal from President Obasanjo to President Bush. The original letter has been pouched to AF/W, and a copy faxed.

Begin text:

February 4, 2002

His Excellency,
Mr. George Bush
President of the United States of America,
White House,
Washington, DC,
USA

Dear President,

I thank you for your expression of support and sympathy after the recent tragic incident in Lagos.

After canceling my trip to New York, we have been busy sorting out the details of this disaster. Full disposal of unexploded ammunition will turn out to be of immense proportion.

I can confirm with appreciation that a small group of military experts from the United States and Britain with their Nigerian counterparts are currently on ground to assess the scale of work required.

A preliminary report indicates that we will be needing a very strong team that will be working in the area for a considerable period of time, in months rather than weeks, and this is an exercise for which we lack personnel with

technical capacity.

Mr. President, I wish to make this special appeal to the Government of the United States, to kindly consider assisting Nigeria in this period of need to provide for us the technical assistance for the disposal of the unexploded ammunition and explosives.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest esteem.

Yours sincerely,

/sgd/

Olusegun Obasanjo
End Text:

[12](#). (C) Comment: Ref B thoroughly documents the powerful expectations of GON officials and ordinary Nigerians that

the USG (with or without the UK) will response to this terrible tragedy. Minister of State Batagarawa has already begun to implement some of the measures the assessment team has recommended. He was critical to the huge success of OFR-P3, and we know we can work effectively with him.

13. (C) The Obasanjo Administration - and Nigeria's recent democracy re in deep trouble. If the international friends of this country do not mobilize to assist the GON at this critical juncture, the increasing instability here may worsen and could produce developments inimical to U.S. national interests, including the War on Terror in which Nigeria has been a staunch and vocal ally.

14. (C) We are convinced that other donors - notably HMG, since PM Blair begins an official visit later today - will feel compelled to chip in if the USG provides the requisite initial critical mass (exact requirements TBD but certainly to include robust EOB capability and adequate medical/medevac support). We urge the Department and the entire interagency to quickly identify and program adequate resources to respond to Obasanjo special appeal.
Jeter